

Message

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Sent: 4/6/2017 2:48:55 PM
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Subject: USS Lead - Press

East Chicago press clips**US EPA Region 5 – prepared by the Office of Public Affairs****April 6, 2017****NWI Times****NAACP leaders host East Chicago lead crisis panel****Copeland talks of lead issue, Cline bridge**

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/naACP-leaders-host-east-chicago-lead-crisis-panel/article_2bb53056-0712-5d41-b907-941d9d987b5f.html

NAACP leaders host East Chicago lead crisis panel

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- Apr 5, 2017 Updated 10 hrs ago EAST CHICAGO — The lead- and –arsenic contaminated West Calumet Housing Complex — eyed for demolition — could one day be redeveloped for housing once again, but James Cunningham, U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development’s deputy regional administrator in Chicago, on Wednesday said the federal housing authority has yet to make that determination.

“If we learned one thing from all of this, it’s to be very careful where we build housing. We won’t build anything in East Chicago that’s environmentally unsafe,” Cunningham said. “And if we’re not going to build on this site, we need to work together to find the most appropriate reuse of West Calumet.”

Cunningham said Wednesday that East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland recently sent a letter to HUD Secretary Ben Carson requesting approval to build housing on the site and for EPA to clean the property to a high enough standard for residential use.

The complex, built in the early 1970s on the footprint of a former lead smelter, is in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s USS Lead Superfund site.

His comments came during a NAACP-sponsored panel discussion Wednesday at First Baptist Church in East Chicago, just east of the public housing complex.

Ongoing EPA cleanup efforts are underway in two nearby contaminated neighborhoods in the Superfund site, where hundreds of families have not been ordered to leave.

Wednesday’s event was designed to give Superfund residents opportunity to air lingering concerns about the ongoing lead crisis in East Chicago. Much of the discussion centered on the future of West Calumet, though some families told stories of decades-long health ailments possibly associated with the city’s industry and pollution.

Residents expressed frustration about potentially rebuilding housing at West Calumet, with Copeland having sounded the alarm last summer about the discovery of dangerously high lead levels. Since that time, nearly 300 families have left the complex with the use of HUD vouchers, but dozens remain on site, unable to find permanent, safe housing.

The East Chicago Housing Authority wants to see families moved out by Friday to temporary housing units in East Chicago and as far as Chicago's South Side, but some households have requested grievance hearings to delay the move. "How is that you can put all those people out of their homes and say that you can clean it to a certain extent to rebuild for more people to come? Why can't the same people stay where they are?" Carla Dunlap, a Superfund site resident, asked.

City officials were not present Wednesday night, but Copeland has repeatedly said the relocation was in families' best interest due to public health and safety concerns. As is the case with most EPA Superfund sites, families would have been allowed to stay under a cleanup plan approved by the agency in 2012, EPA officials have said.

Families who attended Wednesday's panel demanded those displaced should be first in line to relocate back to West Calumet, if the city's Housing Authority chooses to rebuild affordable housing there.

Other residents, including Maritza Lopez, a longtime homeowner in the 4900 block of Euclid Avenue, laid out decades-long health problems to the panel. Lopez told stories of how she lost her mother, father and siblings at young ages to disease and various health conditions. Lopez herself said she questions if the lead and arsenic pollution is behind her own health ailments.

At a related event earlier in the day, Dr. Pamela Pugh, environmental, health and education chair for NAACP in Flint, Michigan, and chief public health adviser for the city of Flint, said a registry is being created to track the long-term health of those impacted by the use of the city of Flint's contaminated drinking water.

She said she would like to see a similar tracking system for families in East Chicago.

NAACP Indiana President Barbara Boling Williams told families the NAACP stands behind them and will offer additional support moving forward.

"That's why we're here, to listen and then send that message and lend our voice to yours. Because we know there are strength in numbers," she said.

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/east-chicago/copeland-talks-of-lead-issue-cline-bridge/article_5309c9f1-7129-599a-943f-43582d40c508.html

Copeland talks of lead issue, Cline bridge

- [By Ed Bierschenk edwin.bierschenk@nwi.com, 219-933-4195](#)
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- Apr 5, 2017 Updated 10 hrs ago EAST CHICAGO — Mayor Anthony Copeland said it is too soon to say what the future land use will be for the site containing the soon-to-be demolished West Calumet Housing Complex, but he wants the land to be returned to residential use standards.

Copeland addressed the lead crisis in East Chicago as well as various other issues, including the Cline Avenue Bridge project, during his State of the City address Wednesday.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has called on Copeland to disclose the anticipated future land use.

"We need to know what the use of the property will be put to, and design the remedy on that, whether it's commercial or residential. There's a big difference if the entire site is going to be paved in concrete, be a playground, (or residential)," Robert Kaplan, acting regional administrator for EPA Region 5 told The Times at the end of last month.

At Wednesday's meeting, Copeland also was asked what he saw that neighborhood being 5 to 10 years down the road. He replied the city would not settle for anything short of the EPA returning the land to residential status. He said cleaning the land to that standard would allow the city to develop the area into anything it wished.

"There is no reason why we can't get this right where the city of East Chicago would be able to develop the land into commercial, residential, anything we desire," he told the audience.

He was more definite when it came to the future of the Cline Avenue Bridge.

"Cline Avenue will begin to take flight with the finishing of its maintenance building in May of 2017 and the first road panel installation starting in June of 2017," Copeland told the audience.

Later, Copeland noted there are many people who do not believe the project will happen, but he thinks that will change as work begins.

"Come June or July, when people start to see the sections go up, then that will help them with their disbelief," he said.

Sincerely,

Steven P. Kaiser
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